

### *- Systematic Errors in Claims Processing Deeply Troubling -*

Washington, DC - U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-Dover) today grilled Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) officials for systematically failing veterans who have filed benefits claims. Today's hearing of the House VA Committee's Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs Subcommittee reviewed the VA's unacceptably high error rate in the disability claims process and the growing benefits claims backlog. Hall called on the VA to take advantage of new funding to increase the quality and rate at which new claims are processed, and end the claims backlog.

The hearing was an opportunity for the VA's Veterans Benefits Administration to provide members of Congress with an update on its effort to improve turnaround time and error rate for new benefits claims. Rep. Hall introduced legislation to require the VA to address these issues and report to Congress, the Disability Claims Modernization Act, which he succeeded in passing in 2008 with bipartisan support. Hall's law provides critical resources to the VA to meet these ambitious new goals, and requires it to report to Congress on its progress.

"The Disability Claims Modernization Act - which I steered through Congress in 2008 provides the resources necessary for improving the accuracy and speed of the claims process," Rep. Hall said. "However, I was very disappointed to learn that the New York VA Regional Office is one of the worst in the country when it comes to accuracy of claims processed. Veterans in the Hudson Valley and across the state of New York deserve better."

A report by the VA's own Office of Inspector General found that the VA's system for identifying errors, the Systemic Technical Accuracy Review (STAR) was off by 10%. Almost 25% of disability claims processed by the VA were found to be incorrect, and even more troubling the accuracy of different Regional Offices varied widely.

"This is unacceptable. An error in almost one of every four claims is simply inexcusable. Even the VA's own method to determine the accuracy of their claims process is itself inaccurate. The VA will never reduce the claims backlog until it understands the backlog." Rep. Hall added. "I am glad that my Subcommittee was able to provide a forum for the Veterans Service Organizations to offer the VA some suggestions for improve their compensation and pension system. I expect the VA to report back to the committee soon about the steps they are taking to ensure our brave veterans receive their correct benefits in a timely manner."

Congressman Hall called on the VA to improve the disability claims system by being honest with veterans and Congress about the scope of the problem.

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